Vol. VIII. Numb. 20

THE OBSERVATOR.

Farther Remarks on our being formerly out-witted by the French *in Treaties, occasion'd chiefly by the Weakness of our Princes, and the Corruption of our Ministry. The Methods our Ancestors took to save our Constitution on such Occasions. Reflexions on a Paragraph of* Dyer's News-Letter, *upon the Murder of Mr.* Dent, *and his ridiculing the Endeavours to reform our Manners.*

From Wednesday, April 6. to Saturday, April 9. 1709.

Country-m. THE Story you told me from *Commines* t'other Day, Master, runs so much in my Head, that I can't forget it; and the Thoughts on't vex me so much the more, that former Experience should not have made us wiser, and more cautious in our Treaties with the *French*; for in all the Negociations we have been concern'd in with *Lewis* the XIVth, he has constantly outwitted us. This brings to Mind an Answer of a Brother Country-man of mine, to the late Duke of *Ormond*, Master; which, by *Commines*'s Character, and my own Observation, seems to be but too applicable to our Country in general.

Obs. What was that, *Roger*?

Country-m. The Duke being at *Chester*, and having Occasion for a Farrier to do something to his Horses, Master, there was one sent for; and the Duke perceiving him to be a stout jolly Fellow, thought he must needs have born Arms on one Side or t'other, during the Civil War: for this was soon after the Restoration; therefore he ask'd him which Side he had taken: To which the Farrier reply'd, *An't please your Grace, I was on that Side who beat all they fought with, and left all they fought for*; Meaning *Oliver* and his Party, Master.

Obs. A cunning Fellow, I'll warrant you, *Roger*.

Country-m. Aye, so *Lord* the Duke said, Master, when the Duke told him the Story. But what signifies our wise Sayings, if we be always out-witted in Practice? That only makes the late Earl of *Rochester*'s Character of King *Charles* the IId applicable to us in general, as to Treaties at least, *viz. That he never say a foolish Thing, and never do a wise one.* I would be oblig'd to you, Master, if you would give me the Reason of it.

Obs. Commines gave you the Reason for his Character t'other Day, *Roger*; and you may perceive his Reflexion was not apply'd to the whole Nation, but only to their Ministry, who led King *Edward* the IVth by the Nose.

Country-m. Then as *Killigrew* said to King *Charles* the IId, Master, I don't wonder so many of our Princes have had sore Noses, since they were so much led by their Ministry. But how comes it to pass, that our Princes have so frequently been misled, Master?

Obs. Our Histories tell us, *Roger*, that it proceeded from their being either unhappy in the Choice of their Ministers, so weak, as not to be able to manage their own Affairs, or so careless, as not to mind them. An Instance of the first Sort we have in *Edward* the IId, who making himself the Property of his Favourites, lost both his Crown and his Life. An Instance of the second is our last King *Charles*, who, tho' a Prince every Way accomplish'd for Government, did so abandon himself to his Pleasures and Laziness, that his W-----s and Favourites did what they pleas'd with him and the Nation too. We may add the late King *James*, whose Popish and arbitrary Ministry and Favourites attacking him on his weak Side, for Bigotry and his Inclination to absolute Power, whilst they attempted to make themselves, ruin'd him. Then as to the Ministry and Courtiers of *Charles* the IId, *De Witt*, in his Book of *the fundamental Maxims and Politicks of* Holland, says, *They were the most lavish and thievish of any Courtiers in the World, that during the War by Sea and Land, they did so misapply and waste the publick Money, that it always fell short.*

Country-m. But had our Constitution no Remedy against such Things, Master?

Obs. Yes, *Roger*, as good as any in the World, and sovereign Remedies too; but wicked Ministers found a Way to make our Remedy the chief Ingredient in our Distemper: They corrupted and bribb'd our Parliaments, as was done by Treasurer *Clifford*, and others, to such a Degree, that instead of preserving our Liberties, which they were oblig'd to do by Virtue of their Trust, they betray'd them; and instead of speaking the Language of the People who chose them, there was nothing to be heard from them, but the Court-Dialect. Argument, and the Interest of the Nation was run down by the Noise of the Courtiers, and bribb'd Members, who drown'd all the Efforts of our few noble Patriots that spoke for their Country, by calling to the *Question to the Question*, or *to the Bar and the Toner*. So that all Things were manag'd by telling of Noses, and not by Dint of Argument. To talk of *Pacta Conventa*, Coronation-Oaths, Original Contracts, *Breda* Declarations, or other most solemn Translations, was accounted Sedition and Rebellion; and that they might effectually strike at the Root of our Constitution, they would allow some popular Members whom they had corrupted before-hand, to bellow against the Misimanagements of the Court, in order to cheat those who were led by them; and when the Court had by Concert, pressingly demanded twice as much Money as they wanted, then those decoy Ducks would inveigh against the Misapplication of the publick Money, and the insatiable Avarice of the Ministry; and by Way of Expedient, propos'd giving them half of what they sought; which deluded the unthinking Yea's and No's. And thus the Ministry accomplish'd their Designs, by acting sometimes the Lyon, and at other Times the Fox.

Country-m. Which Way did our Ancestors preserve our Liberties for so many Ages against such Tricks, Master?

Obs. Any Man who will cast his Eye upon our Histories wrote by *Bacon*, and others, *Roger*, and the Statutes they quote, may see, that our Parliaments preserv'd our Constitution by maintaining the Freedom of Elections and Debate, by retaining stedfastly their own Power and Dignity, according to our fundamental Laws; by impeaching the Ministry, when they put our Princes upon arbitrary Measures; by keeping up their own Power, in giving Orders about the Revenues, about the Privy-Council, about War and Peace, and about conferring Places of Honour and Trust; for in those Days they kept in constant Remembrance the Power which was lodg'd in them by our Constitution, and would neither be bor'd nor brib'd out of it. Any Man may be satisfy'd of this, who casts an Eye upon *Bacon*'s *Historical Discourse of the Uniformity of the Government of* England, Part first and second, where the Contents will direct them to the several Heads.

Country-m.

Country-m. If my Opinion, Maſter, our Gentlemen of Eſtates, and ſuch as are Members of Parliament, would do better to read ſuch Books, than Plays and Novels, and the Advertiſments put up on Sign-Poſts, and in piſſing Corners, that ſuch and ſuch Plays are to be acted for the Benefit of *Peg Thorn*, and other ſuch Songſters and Comedians; or to ſpend ſo much Time in Gaming and Drinking, *&c.* for ſuch Courſes tend only to debauch their Morals, and to make them Contemners of Religion; which is ſo juſtly and ſo univerſally complain'd of at preſent, and as we may ſee fully prov'd by Hiſtory, ſacred and prophane, has ever been fatal to Nations, and certain Prognoſticks of the Subverſion of Governments. Nay, Maſter, if Fame be not a Lyar, there are ſome Places in the World, at no extraordinary Diſtance, where *Horn-Orders*, and ſuch like abominable Debaucheries, have been more minded, than the moſt important Affairs of State, that were at the ſame Time under Conſideration. Therefore, Maſter, 'till a publick Reformation of Manners be more effectually encourag'd, and Religion recover its Credit, which now lies a dying of its Wounds by Enthuſiaſm, Hypocriſy, Scepticiſm, Impoſitions, open Prophaneſs, and Ridicule, I can't ſee what Reaſon we have to expect an honourable End of the War, or to avoid deſolating Judgments. But I have a Letter for you from *Oxford*, relating to ſomething of this, and particularly to the ridiculing of Reformation, and making merry at the barbarous Murder of Mr. *Dent*, which was lately committed by three ruffianly Soldiers of the Guards.

Obſ. Pray read it, *Roger*.

Country-m. 'Tis an Account of a Paragraph of *Dyer's News-Letter* to that City, Maſter, which is thus:

'On Thurſday one *Dent*, by Trade a Shoe-maker, but for ſome Time follow'd the Occupation of an *Informer and Whore-hopper*, was murder'd ſome Days before by three Foot-Soldiers at *Covent-Garden*, was magnificently bury'd at *St. Clements-Danes*, his Corps having been brought in a ſolemn Manner from the Great Room at *Exeter*-Change, ſix Juſtices of Peace carry'd the Pall, and at leaſt a *Score of Parſons went before him two and two*, and Dr. *Bray* preach'd his *Funeral-Sermon*; and 'tis ſaid, *he'll be inſerted in the Kalendar of Martyrs, for the good Service he has done.* The Gentleman adds, Maſter, 'He wiſhes *Dyer* may repent *of the many Ridicules he has caſt on the Reformation.* Pray let me have your Opinion of this Paragraph, Maſter.

Obſ. It beſpeaks the Author to be a diſſolute Fellow, *Roger*; but we are not to wonder, that one, who, from Time to Time, has made ſo bold with the Government by his ſcurrilous Pen, for which he has ſmarted oftner than once by Proſecutions, ſhould thus barbarouſly ſtab the Reputation of a private Man, and ridicule his Murder, and the Reformation of Manners, which he promoted, not as a mercenary Informer, but as a loyal Subject, and good Chriſtian, to put the Laws of the Land and of God in Execution againſt Heaven-daring Vice. Tho' Mr. *Dent* was no Shoe-maker, yet let his Imployment have been what it would, 'twas inhuman, as well as anti-chriſtian in *Dyer*, to make ſuch a tragical Story the Subject of his Mirth. One would have thought, that the general Approbation thoſe Societies have receiv'd from the Greateſt Men in Church and State, her Majeſty's Proclamations, and the Reſpect due to our Laws, and thoſe of God againſt open Vice and Prophaneneſs, might have reſtrain'd this prophane Scribbler from ſuch unbecoming Reflexions, had he been either a good Subject, or a good Chriſtian. Nay, the very Account he himſelf gives of the Solemnity of Mr. *Dent's* Funeral, and the Approbation of what he did by ſo many Juſtices and Clergy-men, to whom he might have added ſeveral Aldermen of *London*, and many other Gentlemen of Note, who attended the Funeral, is a ſevere Reproof to *Dyer* from his own ſcurrilous Pen. But ſuch publick Impudence as this, *Roger*, is too ſpeaking an Inſtance how low Religion, Loyalty, and good Morals, is among a certain Sort of Men in this Nation.

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Juſt publiſh'd, the Eleventh Part of

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